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De Leon, Daniel

What means this strike?

New York City

1916

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ADDRESS Delivered by DANIEL DE LEON in the City Hall of New Bedford, Massachusetts, February 11, 1898.

Published by the
National Executive Committee
Socialist Labor Party
45 Rose Street
New York City
1916

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FIVE
CENTS

Are You a Reader of the Weekly People?

YOU ARE DEPENDENT

upon the capitalist class for a chance to earn a living as long as you allow that class to retain its autocratic hold on industry. If you would attain

THE RIGHT TO WORK

you must organize with the rest of the working class on proper lines. What kind of organization is needed, and what tactics should be pursued to end the serf-like conditions in the shops and industrial plants of the United States is pointed out and explained in

THE WEEKLY PEOPLE

45 ROSE STREET NEW YORK CITY

The Weekly People, being the Party-owned mouthpiece of the Socialist Labor Party of America, aims at industrial democracy through the integral industrial union and revolutionary working class political action. It is a complete Socialist weekly paper, and sells at $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, 25 cents for three months. A trial subscription of seven weeks may be had for 15 cents. Send for a free sample copy.

NOV 1 1944 PCR

Since its first appearance, this speech by Daniel De Leon on "What means this Strike?" has been reprinted by the thousands of copies. It never grows old, although the occasion of its deliverance took place in 1898. It is safe to say that it will be printed again by the many thousands more, for the simple reason that it is a classic on elemental Socialism.

The speech is more than that. It not only gives the workingman the easiest, the clearest and the most substantial introduction to the economics of Socialism, but also puts him "on his feet" with regard to his place in the Labor Movement of the land. It does this by pointing out the defects of the trade union movement as represented by the American Federation of Labor. The structural defects of the A. F. of L. herein brought out are typical of that organization. Replace but the names of the A. F. of L. actors cited with the names of A. F. of L. leaders up-to-date, and the picture is the same. A. F. of L. strikes, and other acts in our day follow the identical lines described and exposed in the speech, hence the peculiar fitness of the pamphlet to-day, as it was when first published.

The same may be said with regard to the other characters, incidents, and places mentioned in the pamphlet. Whether it be on the matter of the capitalist's "original accumulation"; the "directing ability" of the directors; the "hard work" of the capital-holders; the different cities in which the scene may be laid; —all are of a piece with what is taking place in the present. Different names, only, need be substituted,

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INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

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PREFACE.

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—a thing the reader can readily do for himself-- and we have an explanation of what is going on in the struggle of Labor for better economic conditions.

Nor is the address without the solution to the question confronting Labor. This solution is the Socialist union of the workers on the industrial field, and the Socialist political party of the workers on the political field. In its day the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which is mentioned in the address, was the organization which represented the attempt made in the former direction, and the Socialist Labor Party, then as now, represented the organization correctly working in the latter direction. In 1905 the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance became part of the Industrial Workers of the World, when that body was started, and then the program for a revolutionary Socialist industrial organization became more elaborate and constructive. As valuable companion pieces, therefore, to this little tract, we should recommend the addresses by De Leon on "The Preamble of the I. W. W." and "The Burning Question of Trade Unionism". They will carry the reader beyond the ground covered by "What means this Strike?" and complete his grasp of the important matters treated herein.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY.

New York, N. Y., 1913.

What Means This Strike?

Address delivered by Daniel De Leon in the City Hall of New Bedford, Mass., February 11, 1898.

(FROM A STENOGRAPHIC REPORT.)

Working men and working women of New Bedford; ye striking textile workers; and all of you others, who, though not now on strike, have been on strike before this, and will be on strike some other time——:

It has been the habit in this country and in England that, when a strike is on, "stars" in the Labor Movement are invited to appear on the scene, and entertain the strikers; entertain them and keep them in good spirits with rosy promises and prophesies, funny anecdotes, bombastic recitations in prose and poetry; stuff them full of rhetoric and wind—very much in the style that some Generals do, who, by means of bad whiskey, seek to keep up the courage of the soldiers whom they are otherwise unable to beguile. Such has been the habit in the past; to a great extent it continues to be the habit in the present; it was so during the late miners' strike; it has been so to some extent here in New Bedford; and it is so everywhere, to the extent that ignorance of the Social Question predominates. To the extent, however, that Socialism gets a footing among the working class such false and puerile tactics are thrown aside. The Socialist workingmen of New Bedford, on whose invitation I am here; all those of us who are members of that class-conscious revolutionary international organization of the working class, that throughout the world stands out to-day as the leading and most promiseful feature of the age;—all such would consider it a crime on the part of the men, whom our organization sends forth to preach the Gospel of

Labor, if they were to spend their platform time in "tickling" the workers. Our organization sends us out to teach the workers, to enlighten them on the great issue before them, and the great historic drama in which most of them are still unconscious actors. Some of you, accustomed to a different diet, may find my speech dry; if there be any such here, let him leave; he has not yet graduated from that primary school reared by experience in which the question of wages is forced upon the workers as a serious question, and they are taught that it demands serious thought to grapple with, and solve it. If, however, you have graduated from that primary department, and have come here with the requisite earnestness, then you will not leave this hall without having, so to speak, caught firm hold of the cable of the Labor Movement; then the last strike of this sort has been seen in New Bedford; then, the strikes that may follow will be as different from this as vigorous manhood is from toddling infancy; then you will have entered upon that safe and sure path along which, not, as heretofore, eternal disaster will mark your tracks, but New Bedford, Massachusetts, and the nation herself will successively fall into your hands, with freedom as the crowning fruit of your efforts. (Applause.)

Three years ago I was in your midst during another strike. The superficial observer who looks back to your attitude during that strike, who looks back to your attitude during the strikes that preceded that one, who now turns his eyes to your attitude in the present strike, and who discovers substantially no difference between your attitude now and then might say, "Why, it is a waste of time to speak to such men; they learn nothing from experience; they will eternally fight the same hopeless battle; the battle to establish 'safe relations' with the capitalist class, with the same hopeless weapon: the 'pure and simple' organization of labor!" But the Socialist does not take that view. There is one thing about your conduct that enlists for and entitles you to the warm sympathy of the Socialist, and that is that, despite your persistent errors in fundamental principles, in aims and methods, despite the illusions that you are chasing after, despite the increasing poverty and cumulating failures that press upon you, despite all that you preserve manhood enough not to submit to oppression, but rise in the rebellion that is implied in a strike. The attitude of workingmen engaged in a bona fide strike is an inspiring one. It is an earnest that slavery will not prevail. The slave alone who will not rise against his master, who will meekly bend his back to the lash and turn his cheek to him who plucks his beard—that slave alone is hopeless. But the slave, who, as you of New Bedford, persists, despite failures and poverty, in rebelling, there is always hope for. This is the reason I have considered it worth my while to leave my home and interrupt my work in New York, and come here, and spend a few days with you. I bank my hopes wholly and build entirely upon this sentiment of rebellion within you.

WHENCE DO WAGES COME AND WHENCE PROFITS?

What you now stand in need of, aye, more than of bread, is the knowledge of a few elemental principles of political economy and of sociology. Be not frightened at the words. It is only the capitalist professors who try to make them so difficult of understanding that the very mentioning of them is expected to throw the workingman into a palpitation of the heart. The subjects are easy of understanding.

The first point that a workingman should be clear upon is this: What is the source of the wages he receives; what is the source of the profits his employer lives on? The following dialogue is not uncommon:

Workingman—"Do I understand you rightly, that you Socialists want to abolish the capitalist class?"

Socialist—"That is what we are after."

Workingman—"You are!? Then I don't want any of you. Why, even now my wages are small; even now I can barely get along. If you abolish the capitalist I'll have nothing; there will be nobody to support me."

Who knows how many workingmen in this hall are typified by the workingman in this dialogue!

When, on pay-day, you reach out your horny, "unwashed" hand it is empty. When you take it back again, your wages are on it. Hence the belief that the capitalist is the source of your living, that he is your bread-giver, your supporter. Now that is an error, an optic illusion.

If, early in the morning you go on top of some house and look eastward, it will seem to you that the sun moves and that you are standing still. Indeed, that was at one time the general and accepted belief. But it was an error, based upon an optic illusion. So long as that error prevailed the sciences could hardly make any progress. Humanity virtually stood stock still. Not until the illusion was discovered and the error overthrown, not until it was ascertained that things were just the other way, that the sun stood still, and that it was our planet that moved at a breakneck rate of speed, was any real progress possible. So likewise with this illusion about the source of wages. You can not budge, you can not move one step forward unless you discover that, in this respect also, the fact is just the reverse of the appearance: that, not the capitalist, but the workingman, is the source of the worker's living; that it is not the capitalist who supports the workingman, but the workingman who supports the capitalist (Loud applause); that it is not the capitalist who gives bread to the workingman, but the workingman who gives himself a dry crust, and sumptuously stocks the table of the capitalist (Long and loud applause). This is a cardinal point in political economy; and this is the point I wish first of all to establish in your minds. Now, to the proof.

Say that I own $100,000. Don't ask me where I got it. If you do, I would have to answer you in the language of all capitalists that "Such a question is un-American." You must not look into the source of this my "original accumulation": it is un-American to pry into such secrets. (Laughter.) Presently I shall take you into my confidence. For the present I shall draw down the blinds, and keep

out your un-American curiosity. I have $100,000, and am a capitalist. Now, I may not know much; no capitalist does; but I know a few things, and among them is a little plain arithmetic. I take a pencil and put down on a sheet of paper "$100,000." Having determined that I shall need at least $5,000 a year to live with comfort, I divide the $100,000 by $5,000; the quotient is 20. My hair then begins to stand on end. The 20 tells me that, if I pull $5,000 annually out of $100,000, these are exhausted during that term. At the beginning of the 21st year I shall have nothing left. "Heaven and earth, I would then have to go to work if I wanted to live!" No capitalist relishes that thought. He will tell you, and pay his politicians, professors and political parsons, to tell you, that "labor is honorable." He is perfectly willing to let you have that undivided honor, and will do all he can that you may not be deprived of any part of it; but, as to himself, he has for work a constitutional aversion; the capitalist runs away from work like the man bitten by a mad dog runs away from water. I want to live without work on my $100,000 and yet keep my capital untouched. If you ask any farmer, he will tell you that if he invests in a Durham cow she will yield him a supply of 16 quarts a day, but, after some years, the supply goes down; she will run dry; and then a new cow must be got. But I, the capitalist, aim at making my capital a sort of $100,000 cow, which I shall annually be able to milk $5,000 out of, without her ever running dry. I want, in short, to perform the proverbially impossible feat of eating my cake, and yet having it. The capitalist system performs that feat for me. How?

I go to a broker. I say, Mr. Broker, I have $100,000; I want you to invest that for me. I don't tell him that I have a special liking for New Bedford mills' stock; I don't tell him I have a special fancy for railroad stock; I leave the choosing with him. The only direction I give him is to get the stock in such a corporation as will pay the highest dividend. Mr. Broker has a list of all of these corpo-

rations, your New Bedford corporations among them, to the extent that they may be listed; he makes the choice, say of one of your mills right here in this town. I hire a vault in a safe deposit company and I put my stock into it. I lock it up, put the key in my pocket, and I go and have a good time. If it is too cold in the north I go down to Florida; if it is too hot there I go to the Adirondack mountains; occasionally I take a spin across the Atlantic and run the gauntlet of all the gambling dens in Europe; I spend my time with fast horses and faster women; I never put my foot inside the factory that I hold stock of; I don't even come to the town in which it is located, and yet, lo and behold, a miracle takes place!

Those of you versed in Bible lore surely have read or heard about the miracle that God performed when the Jews were in the desert and about to die of hunger. The Lord opened the skies and let manna come. But the Jews had to get up early in the morning, before the sun rose; if they overslept themselves the sun would melt the manna, and they would have nothing to eat. They had to get up early, and go out, and stoop down and pick up the manna and put it in baskets and take it to their tents and eat it. With the appearance of the manna on earth the miracle ended. But the miracles that happen in this capitalist system of production are so wonderful that those recorded in the Bible don't hold a candle to them. The Jews had to do some work, but I, stock-holding capitalist, need do no work at all. I can turn night into day, and day into night. I can lie flat on my back all day and all night; and every three months my manna comes down to me in the shape of dividends. Where does it come from? What does the dividend represent?

In the factory of which my broker bought stock, workmen, thousands of them, were at work; they have woven cloth that has been put upon the market to the value of $7,000; out of the $7,000 that the cloth is worth my wage workers receive $2,000 in wages, and I receive the $5,000 as profits or dividends. Did I, who never put my foot inside of the mill; did I, who never put my foot inside of New Bedford; did I, who don't know how a loom looks; did I, who contributed nothing whatever toward the weaving of that cloth; did I do any work whatever toward producing those $5,000 that came to me? No man, with brains in his head instead of sawdust, can deny that those $7,000 are exclusively the product of the wage workers in that mill. That out of the wealth thus produced by them alone, they get $2,000 in wages, and I, who did nothing at all, I get the $5,000. The wages these workers receive represent wealth that they have themselves produced; the profits that the capitalist pockets represent wealth that the wage workers produced, and that the capitalist, does what? —let us call things by their names—that the capitalist steals from them.

THE STOCK CORPORATION.

You may ask, But is that the rule, is not that illustration an exception?—Yes, it is the rule; the exception is the other thing. The leading industries of the United States are to-day stock concerns, and thither will all others worth mentioning move. An increasing volume of capital in money is held in stocks and shares. The individual capitalist holds stock in a score of concerns in different trades, located in different towns, too many and too varied for him even to attempt to run. By virtue of his stock, he draws his income from them; which is the same as saying that he lives on what the workingmen produce but are robbed of. Nor is the case at all essentially different with the concerns that have not yet developed into stock corporations.

"DIRECTORS."

Again, you may ask, The conclusion that what such stockholders live on is stolen wealth because they evidently perform no manner of work is irrefutable, but are all stockholders equally idle and superfluous; are there not some who do perform some work; are there not "Direc-

tors"?—There are "Directors," but these gentlemen bear a title much like those "Generals" and "Majors" and "Colonels" who now go about, and whose generalship, majorship and colonelship consisted in securing substitutes during the war. (Applause.) These "Directors" are simply the largest stock-holders, which is the same as to say that they are the largest sponges; their directorship consists only in directing conspiracies against rival "Directors," in bribing Legislatures, Executives and Judiciaries, in picking out and hiring men out of your midst to serve as bell-wethers, that will lead you, like cattle, to the capitalist shambles, and tickle you into contentment and hopefulness while you are being fleeced. The court decisions removing responsibility from the "Directors" are numerous and increasing; each such decision establishes, from the capitalist Government's own mouth, the idleness and superfluousness of the capitalist class. These "Directors," and the capitalist class in general, may perform some "work," they do perform some "work," but that "work" is not of a sort that directly or indirectly aids production;—no more than the intense mental strain and activity of the "work" done by the pickpocket is directly or indirectly productive. (Applause.)

"ORIGINAL ACCUMULATION."

Finally, you may ask, No doubt the stockholder does no work, and hence lives on the wealth we produce; no doubt these "Directors" have a title that only emphasizes their idleness by a swindle, and, consequently, neither they are other than sponges on the working class; but did not your own illustration start with the supposition that the capitalist in question had $100,000, is not his original capital entitled to some returns?—This question opens an important one; and now I shall, as I promised you, take you into my confidence; I shall raise the curtain which I pulled down before the question, Where did I get it? I shall now let you pry into my secret.

Whence does this original capital, or "original accumulation," come? Does it grow on the capitalist like hair on his face, or nails on his fingers and toes? Does he secrete it as he secretes sweat from his body? Let me take one illustration of many.

Before our present Governor, the Governor of New York was Levi Parsons Morton. The gentleman must be known to all of you. Besides having been Governor of the Empire State, he was once Vice-President of the Nation, and also at one time our Minister to France. Mr. Morton is a leading "gentleman"; he wears the best of broadcloth; his shirt-bosom is of spotless white; his nails are trimmed by manicurists; he uses the elitest language; he has front-pews in a number of churches; he is a pattern of morality, law and order; and he is a multi-millionaire capitalist. How did he get his start millionaire-ward? Mr. Morton being a Republican, I shall refer you to a Republican journal, the New York "Tribune," for the answer of this interesting question. The "Tribune" of the day after Mr. Morton's nomination for Governor in 1894 gave his biography. There we are informed that Mr. Morton was born in New Hampshire of poor parents; he was industrious, he was clever, he was pushing, and he settled, a poor young man, in New York city, where in 1860, mark the date, he started a clothing establishment; then, in rapid succession, we are informed that he failed, and—STARTED A BANK! (Loud laughter and applause.) A man may start almost any kind of a shop without a cent. If the landlord gave him credit for the rent, and the brewer, the shoe manufacturer, the cigar manufacturer, etc., etc., give him credit for the truck, he may start a saloon, a shoe shop, a cigar shop, etc., etc., without any cash, do business and pay off his debt with the proceeds of his sales. But there is ONE shop that he cannot start in that way. That shop is the banking shop. For that he must have cash on hand. He can no more shave notes without money than he can shave whiskers without razors. Now, then, the man who just previously stood up before a notary pub-

lic and swore "So help him, God," he had no money to pay his creditors, immediately after, without having in the meantime married an heiress, has money enough to start a bank on! Where did he get it? (Applause.) Read the biographies of any of our founders of capitalist concerns by the torch-light of this biography, and you will find them all to be essentially the same, or suggestively silent upon the doings of our man during the period that he gathers his "original accumulation." You will find that "original capital" to be the child of fraudulent failures and fires, of high-handed crime of some sort or other, or of the sneaking crime of appropriating trust funds, etc. With such "original capital,"—gotten by dint of such "cleverness," "push" and "industry,"—as a weapon, the "original" capitalist proceeds to fleece the working class that has been less "industrious," "pushing" and "clever" than he. If he consumes all his fleecings, his capital remains of its original size in his hands, unless some other gentleman of the road, gifted with greater "industry," "push" and "cleverness" than he, comes around and relieves him of it; if he consume not the whole of his fleecings, his capital moves upward, million-ward.

The case is proved: Labor alone produces all wealth. Wages are that part of Labor's own product that the workingman is allowed to keep; profits are the present and running stealings perpetrated by the capitalist upon the workingman from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year; capital is the accumulated past stealings of the capitalist—corner-stoned upon his "original accumulation." (Long applause.)

Who of you before me fails now to understand, or would still deny that, not the capitalist supports the workingman, but the workingman supports the capitalist; or still holds that the workingman could not exist without the capitalist? If any there be, let him raise his hand and speak up now——

None? Then I may consider this point settled; and shall move on.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

The second point, on which it is absolutely necessary that you be clear, is the nature of your relation, as working people, to the capitalist in this capitalist system of production. This point is an inevitable consequence of the first.

You have seen that the wages you live on and the profits the capitalist riots in are the two parts into which is divided the wealth that you produce. The workingman wants a larger and larger share, so does the capitalist. A thing can not be divided into two shares so as to increase the share of each. If the workingman produces, say, $4 worth of wealth a day, and the capitalist keeps 2, there are only 2 left for the workingman; if the capitalist keeps 3, there is only 1 left for the workingman; if the capitalist keeps 3½ there is only ½ left for the workingman. Inversely, if the workingman pushes up his share from ½ to 1, there are only 3 left to the capitalist; if the workingman secures 2, the capitalist will be reduced to 2; if the workingman push still onward and keep 3, the capitalist will have to put up with 1;—and if the workingman makes up his mind to enjoy all that he produces, and keep all the 4, THE CAPITALIST WILL HAVE TO GO TO WORK. (Long applause.) These plain figures upset the theory about the Workingman and the Capitalist being brothers. Capital, meaning the Capitalist Class, and Labor, have been portrayed by capitalist illustrated papers as Chang and Eng; this, I remember, was done notably by "Harper's Weekly," the property of one of the precious "Seeley Diners" (Laughter);—you remember that "dinner." (Laughter.) The Siamese Twins were held together by a piece of flesh. Wherever Chang went Eng was sure to go; if Chang was happy, Eng's pulse throbbed harder; if Chang caught cold, Eng sneezed in chorus with him; when Chang died, Eng followed suit within five minutes. Do we find that to be the relation of the workingman and the capitalist? Do you find that the fatter the capitalist, the fatter also grow the workingmen? Is not your experience rather that the wealthier the capitalist, the poorer are the workingmen?

That the more magnificent and prouder the residences of the capitalist, the dingier and humbler become those of the workingmen? That the happier the life of the capitalist's wife, the greater the opportunities of his children for enjoyment and education, the heavier becomes the cross borne by the workingmen's wives, while their children are crowded more and more from the schools and deprived of the pleasures of childhood? Is that your experience, or is it not? (Voices all over the hall: "It is!" and applause.)

The pregnant point that underlies these pregnant facts is that, between the Working Class and the Capitalist Class, there is an irrepressible conflict, a class struggle for life. No glib tongued politician can vault over it, no capitalist professor or official statistician can argue it away; no capitalist parson can veil it; no labor fakir can straddle it; no "reform" architect can bridge it over. It crops up in all manner of ways, like in this strike, in ways that disconcert all the plans and all the schemes of those who would deny or ignore it. It is a struggle that will not down, and must be ended only by either the total subjugation of the Working Class, or the abolition of the Capitalist Class. (Loud applause.)

Thus you perceive that the theory on which your "pure and simple" trade organizations are grounded, and on which you went into this strike, is false. There being no "common interests," but only HOSTILE INTERESTS, between the Capitalist Class and the Working Class, the battle you are waging to establish "safe relations" between the two is a hopeless one.

Put to the touchstone of these undeniable principles the theory upon which your "pure and simple" trade organizations are built, and you will find it to be false; examined by the light of these undeniable principles the road that your false theory makes you travel and the failures that have marked your career must strike you as its inevitable result. How are we to organize and proceed? you may ask. Before answering the question, let me take up another branch of the subject. Its presentation will sweep aside

another series of illusions that beset the mind of the working class, and will, with what has been said, give us a sufficient sweep over the ground to lead us to the right answer.

DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY.

Let us take a condensed page of the country's history. For the sake of plainness, and forced to it by the exigency of condensation, I shall assume small figures. Place yourselves back a sufficient number of years with but ten competing weaving concerns in the community. How the individual ten owners came by the "original accumulations" that enabled them to start as capitalists you now know. (Laughter.) Say that each of the ten capitalists employs ten men; that each man receives $2 a day, and that the product of each of the ten sets of men in each of the ten establishments is worth $40 a day. You know now also that it is out of these $40 worth of wealth, produced by the men, that each of the ten competing capitalists takes the $20 that he pays the ten men in wages, and that out of that same $40 worth of wealth he takes the $20 that he pockets as profits. Each of these ten capitalists makes, accordingly, $120 a week.

This amount of profits, one should think, should satisfy our ten capitalists. It is a goodly sum to pocket without work. Indeed, it may satisfy some, say most of them. But if for any of many reasons it does not satisfy any one of them, the whole string of them is set in commotion. "Individuality" is a deity at whose shrine the capitalist worships, or affects to worship. In point of fact, capitalism robs of individuality, not only the working class, but capitalists themselves. The action of any one of the lot compels action by all; like a row of bricks, the dropping of one makes all the others drop successively. Let us take No. 1. He is not satisfied with $120 a week. Of the many reasons he may have for that, let's take this: He has a little daughter; eventually, she will be of marriageable age; whom is he planning to marry her to? Before the public, particularly before the workers, he will declaim on the

"sovereignty" of our citizens, and declare the country is stocked with nothing but "peers." In his heart, though, he feels otherwise. He looks even upon his fellow capitalists as plebeians; he aspires at a Prince, a Duke, or at least a Count for a son-in-law; and in visions truly reflecting the vulgarity of his mind, he beholds himself the grandfather of Prince, Duke or Count grandbrats. To realize this dream he must have money; Princes, etc., are expensive luxuries. His present income, $120 a week, will not buy the luxury. He must have some more. To his employees he will recommend reliance on heaven; he himself knows that if he wants more money it will not come from heaven, but must come from the sweat of his employees' brows. As all the wealth produced in his shop is $40 a day, he knows that, if he increases his share of $20 to $30, there will be only $10 left for wages. He tries this. He announces a wage reduction of 50 per cent. His men spontaneously draw themselves together and refuse to work; they go on strike. What is the situation?

In those days it needed skill, acquired by long training, to do the work; there may have been corner-loafers out of work, but not weavers; possibly at some great distance there may have been weavers actually obtainable, but in those days there was neither telegraph nor railroad to communicate with them; finally, the nine competitors of No. 1, having no strike on hand, continued to produce, and thus threatened to crowd No. 1 out of the market. Thus circumstanced, No. 1 caves in. He withdraws his order of wage reduction. "Come in," he says to his striking workmen, "let's make up; Labor and Capital are brothers; the most loving of brothers sometimes fall out; we have had such a falling out; it was a slip; you have organized yourselves in a union with a $2 a day wage scale; I shall never fight the union; I love it, come back to work." And the men did.

Thus ended the first strike. The victory won by the men made many of them feel bold. At their first next meeting they argued: "The employer wanted to reduce

our wages and got left; why may not we take the hint and reduce his profits by demanding higher wages; we licked him in his attempt to lower our wages, why should we not lick him in an attempt to resist our demand for more pay?" But the labor movement is democratic. No one man can run things. At that union meeting the motion to demand higher pay is made by one member, another must second it; amendments and amendments to the amendments are put with the requisite seconders; debate follows; points of order are raised, ruled on, appealed from and settled;—in the meantime it grows late, the men must be at work early the next morning, the hour to adjourn arrives, and the whole matter is left pending. Thus much for the men.

Now for the employer. He locks himself up in his closet. With clenched fists and scowl on brow, he gnashes his teeth at the victory of his "brother" Labor, its union and its union regulations. And he ponders. More money he must have and is determined to have. This resolution is arrived at with the swiftness and directness which capitalists are able to. Differently from his men, he is not many, but one. He makes the motion, seconds it himself, puts it, and carries it unanimously. More profits he SHALL HAVE. But how? Aid comes to him through the mail. The letter-carrier brings him a circular from a machine shop. Such circulars are frequent even to-day. It reads like this: "Mr. No. 1, you are employing ten men; I have in my machine shop a beautiful machine with which you can produce, with 5 men, twice as much as now with 10; this machine does not chew tobacco; it does not smoke (some of these circulars are cruel and add:) this machine has no wife who gets sick and keeps it home to attend to her; it has no children who die, and whom to bury it must stay away from work; it never goes on strike; it works and grumbles not; come and see it."

INVENTION.

Right here let me lock a switch at which not a few people are apt to switch off and be banked. Some may think:

"Well, at least that machine capitalist is entitled to his profits; he surely is an inventor." A grave error. Look into the history of our inventors, and you will see that those who really profited by their genius are so few that you can count them on the fingers of your hands, and have fingers to spare. The capitalists either take advantage of the inventor's stress and buy his invention for a song; the inventor believes he can make his haul with his next invention; but before that is perfected, he is as poor as before, and the same advantage is again taken of him; until finally the brown of his brains being exhausted, he sinks into a pauper's grave, leaving the fruit of his genius for private capitalists to grow rich on; or the capitalist simply steals the invention and gets his courts to decide against the inventor. From Eli Whitney down, that is the treatment the inventor, as a rule, receives from the capitalist class.

Such a case, illustrative of the whole situation, happened recently. The Bonsack Machine Co. discovered that its employees made numerous inventions, and it decided to appropriate them wholesale. To this end, it locked out its men, and demanded of all applicants for work that they sign a contract whereby, in "consideration of employment" they assign to the company all their rights in whatever invention they may make during the term of their employment. One of these employees, who had signed such a contract, informed the Company one day that he thought he could invent a machine by which cigarettes could be held closed by crimping at the ends, instead of pasting. This was a valuable idea; and he was told to go ahead. For six months he worked at this invention and perfected it; and, having during all that time. received not a cent in wages or otherwise from the company, he patented his invention himself. The company immediately brought suit against him in the Federal Courts, claiming that the invention was its property; and—THE FEDERAL COURT DECIDED IN FAVOR OF THE COMPANY, THUS ROBBING THE INVENTOR OF HIS TIME, HIS MONEY, OF THE FRUIT OF HIS GENIUS, AND

OF HIS UNQUESTIONABLE RIGHTS!! (Cries of "Shame" in the hall.) "Shame"? Say not "Shame"! He who himself applies the torch to his own house has no cause to cry "Shame!" when the flames consume it. Say rather "Natural!" and smiting your own breasts say "Ours the fault!" Having elected into power the Democratic, Republican, Free Trade, Protection, Silver or Gold platforms of the capitalist class, the working class has none but itself to blame, if the official lackeys of that class turn against the working class the public powers put into their hands. (Loud applause.)—The capitalist owner of the machine shop that sends the circular did not make the invention.

THE SCREWS BEGIN TO TURN.

To return to No. 1. He goes and sees the machine; finds it to be as represented; buys it; puts it up in his shop; picks out of his 10 men the 5 least active in the late strike; sets them to work at $2 a day as before; and full of bows and smirks, addresses the other 5 thus: "I am sorry I have no places for you; I believe in union principles and am paying the union scale to the 5 men I need; I don't need you now; good bye. I hope I'll see you again." And he means this last as you will presently perceive.

What is the situation now? No. 1 pays, as before, $2 a day, but to only 5 men; these, with the aid of the machine, now produce twice as much as the 10 did before; their product is now $80 worth of wealth; as only $10 of this goes in wages, the capitalist has a profit of $70 a day, or 250 per cent. more. He is moving fast towards his Prince, Duke or Count son-in-law. (Laughter and applause.)

Now watch the men whom his machine displaced; their career throws quite some light on the whole question. Are they not "American citizens?" Is not this a "Republic with a Constitution?" Is anything else wanted to get a living? Watch them! They go to No. 2 for a job; before they quite reach the place, the doors open and 5 of that concern are likewise thrown out upon the street.—

What happened there? The "individuality" of No. 2 yielded to the pressure of capitalist development. The purchase of the machine by No. 1 enabled him to produce so much more plentifully and cheaply; if No. 2 did not do likewise, he would be crowded out of the market by No. 1; No. 2, accordingly, also invested in a machine, with the result that 5 of his men are also thrown out.

These 10 unemployed proceed to No. 3, hoping for better luck there. But what sight is that that meets their astonished eyes? Not 5 men, as walked out of Nos. 1 and 2, but all No. 3's 10 have landed on the street; and, what is more surprising yet to them, No. 3 himself is on the street, now reduced to the condition of a workingman along with his former employees.—What is it that happened there? In this instance the "individuality" of No. 3 was crushed by capitalist development. The same reason that drove No. 2 to procure the machine, rendered the machine indispensable to No. 3. But having, differently from his competitors Nos. 1 and 2, spent all his stealings from the workingmen instead of saving up some, he is now unable to make the purchase; is, consequently, unable to produce as cheaply as they; is, consequently, driven into bankruptcy, and lands in the class of the proletariat, whose ranks are thus increased.

The now 21 unemployed proceed in their hunt for work, and make the round of the other mills. The previous experiences are repeated. Not only are there no jobs to be had, but everywhere workers are thrown out, if the employer got the machine; and if he did not, workers with their former employers, now ruined, join the army of the unemployed.

What happened in that industry happened in all others. Thus the ranks of the capitalist class are thinned out, and the class is made more powerful, while the ranks of the working class are swelled, and the class is made weaker. This is the process that explains how, on the one hand, your New Bedford mills become the property of ever fewer men; how, according to the census, their aggregate

capital runs up to over $14,000,000; how, despite "bad times," their profits run up to upwards of $1,300,000; how, on the other hand, your position becomes steadily more precarious.

No. 1's men return to where they started from. Scabbing they will not. Uninformed upon the mechanism of capitalism, they know not what struck them; and they expect "better times,"—just as so many equally uninformed workingmen are expecting to-day; in the meantime, thinking thereby to hasten the advent of the good times, No. 1's men turn out the Republican party and turn in the Democratic, turn out the Democratic and turn in the Republican,—just as our misled workingmen are now doing (Applause), not understanding that, whether they put in or out Republicans, Democrats, Protectionists or Free Traders, Goldbugs or Silverbugs, they are every time putting in the capitalist platform, upholding the social principle that throws them out of work or reduces their wages. (Long applause.)

But endurance has its limits. The Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad for the Indiana Division, speaking, of course, from the capitalist standpoint, recently said: "Many solutions are being offered for the labor question; but there is just one and no more. It is this: Lay a silver dollar on the shelf, and at the end of a year you have a silver dollar left; lay a workingman on the shelf, and at the end of a month you have a skeleton left. (Loud applause.) This," said he, "is the solution of the labor problem." In short, starve out the workers. No. 1's men finally reach that point. Finally that happens that few if any can resist. A man may stand starvation and resist the sight of starving wife and children; but if he has not wherewith to buy medicine to save the life of a sick wife or child, all control is lost over him. On the heels of starvation, sickness follows, and No. 1's men throw to the wind all union principles; they are now ready to do anything to save their dear ones. Cap in hand, they appear before No. 1, the starch taken clean out of them during

the period they "lay on the shelf." They ask for work; they themselves offer to work for $1 a day. And No. 1, the brother of labor, who but recently expressed devotion to the union, what of him? His eyes sparkle at "seeing again" the men he had thrown out; at their offer to work for less than the men now employed, his chest expands, and, grabbing them by the hand in a delirium of patriotic ecstacy, he says: "Welcome, my noble American citizens. (Applause); I am proud to see you ready to work and earn an honest penny for your dear wives and darling children (Applause); I am delighted to notice that you are not, like so many others, too lazy to work (Applause); let the American eagle screech in honor of your emancipation from the slavery of a rascally union (Long applause); let the American eagle wag his tail an extra wag in honor of your freedom from a dictatorial walking delegate (Long applause); you are my long lost brothers (Laughter and long applause); go in, my $1-a-day brothers!" and he throws his former $2-a-day brothers heels over head upon the sidewalk. (Long and prolonged applause.)

When the late $2-a-day men have recovered from their surprise, they determine on war. But what sort of war? Watch them closely, and you may detect many a feature of your own in that mirror. "Have we not struck," argue they, "and beaten this employer once before? If we strike again, we shall again beat him." But the conditions have wholly changed.

In the first place, there were no unemployed skilled workers during that first strike; now there are; plenty of them, dumped upon the country, not out of the steerage of vessels from Europe, but by the native-born machine;

In the second place, that very machine has to such an extent eliminated skill that, while formerly only the unemployed in a certain trade could endanger the jobs of those at work in that trade, now the unemployed of all trades (virtually the whole army of the unemployed) bear down upon the employed in each; we know of quondam shoemakers taking the jobs of hatters; quondam hatters

taking the jobs of weavers; quondam weavers taking the jobs of cigarmakers; quondam cigarmakers taking the jobs of "machinists"; quondam farm hands taking the jobs of factory hands, etc., etc., so easy has it become to learn what is now needed to be known of a trade;

In the third place, telegraph and railroads have made all of the unemployed easily accessible to the employer;

Finally, different from former days, the competitors have to a great extent consolidated; here in New Bedford, for instance, the false appearance of competition between the mill owners is punctured by the fact that to a great extent seemingly "independent" mills are owned by one family, as is the case with the Pierce family.

Not, as at the first strike, with their flanks protected, but now wholly exposed through the existence of a vast army of hungry unemployed; not, as before, facing a divided enemy, but now faced by a consolidated mass of capitalist concerns; how different is now the situation of the strikers! The changed conditions brought about changed results; instead of VICTORY, there was DEFEAT (Applause); and we have had a long series of them. Either hunger drove the men back to work; or the unemployed took their places; or, if the capitalist was in a hurry, he fetched in the help of the strong arm of the government, now HIS GOVERNMENT.

PRINCIPLES OF SOUND ORGANIZATION.

We now have a sufficient survey of the field to enable us to answer the question, How shall we organize so as not to fight the same old hopeless battle?

Proceeding from the knowledge that labor alone produces all wealth; that less and less of this wealth comes to the working class, and more and more of it is plundered by the idle class or capitalist; that this is the result of the working class being stripped of the tool (machine), without which it cannot earn a living; and, finally, that the machine or tool has reached such a state of development that it can no longer be operated by the individual but

needs the collective effort of many;—proceeding from this knowledge, it is clear that the aim of all intelligent class-conscious workingmen must be the overthrow of the system of private ownership in the tools of production because that system keeps them in wage slavery.

Proceeding from the further knowledge of the use made of the Government by the capitalist class, and of the necessity that class is under to own the Government, so as to enable it to uphold and prop up the capitalist system;—proceeding from that knowledge, it is clear that the aim of all intelligent, class-conscious workingmen must be to bring the Government under the control of their own class by joining and electing the American wing of the International Socialist party—the Socialist Labor party of America, and thus establishing the Socialist Co-operative Republic. (Applause.)

But in the meantime, while moving toward that ideal, though necessary, goal, what to do? The thing cannot be accomplished in a day, nor does election come around every twenty-four hours. Is there nothing that we can do for ourselves between election and election?

Yes; plenty.

When crowded, in argument, to the wall by us New Trade Unionists, by us of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance,* your present, or old and "pure and simple" organizations, yield the point of ultimate aims; they grant the ultimate necessity of establishing Socialism; but they claim "the times are not yet ripe" for that; and, not yet being ripe, they lay emphasis upon the claim that the "pure and simple" union does the workers some good NOW by getting something NOW from the employers and from the capitalist parties. We are not "practical" they tell us they are. Let us test this theory on the spot. Here in New Bedford there is not yet a single New Trade Unionist organization in existence. The "pure and simple" trade union has had the field all to itself. All of you, whose

*This was in 1898. The S. T. and L. A. has since (1905) merged into the Industrial Workers of the World.

wages are NOW higher than they were five years ago, kindly raise a hand. (No hand is raised.) All of you whose wages are now lower than five years ago, please raise a hand. (The hands of the large audience go up.) The proof of the pudding lies in the eating. Not only does "pure and simpledom" shut off your hope of emancipation by affecting to think such a state of things is unreachable now, but in the meantime and RIGHT NOW, the "good" it does to you, the "something" it secures for you "from the employers and from the politicians" is lower wages. (Prolonged applause.) That is what their "practicalness" amounts to in point of fact. Presently I shall show you that they prove "practical" only to the labor fakirs who run them, and whom they put up with. No, no; years ago, before capitalism had reached its present development, a trade organization of labor could and did afford protection to the workers, even if, as the "pure and simple" union, it was wholly in the dark on the issue. THAT TIME IS NO MORE.

The New Trade Unionist knows that no one or two, or even half a dozen elections will place in the hands of the working class the Government of the land; and New Trades Unionism, not only wishes to do something now for the workers, but it knows that the thing can be done, and how to do it.

"Pure and Simple" or British trade unionism has done a double mischief to the workers: Besides leaving them in their present pitiable plight, it has caused many to fly off the handle and lose all trust in the power of trade organization. The best of these, those who have not become pessimistic and have not been wholly demoralized, see nothing to be done but voting right on election day—casting their vote straight for the S. L. P. This is a serious error. By thus giving over all participation in the industrial movement, they wholly disconnect themselves from the class struggle that is going on every day; and by putting off their whole activity to a single day in the year—election day, they become floaters in the air. I know several

such. Without exception they are dreamy and flighty and unbalanced in their methods.

The utter impotence of "pure and simple" unionism to-day is born of causes that may be divided under two main heads.

One is the contempt in which the capitalist and ruling class holds the working people. In 1886, when instinct was, unconsciously to myself, leading me to look into the social problem, when as yet it was to me a confused and blurred interrogation mark, I associated wholly with capitalists. Expressions of contempt for the workers were common. One day I asked a set of them why they treated their men so hard, and had so poor an opinion of them. "They are ignorant, stupid and corrupt," was the answer, almost in chorus.

"What makes you think so?" I asked. "Have you met them all?"

"No," was the reply, "we have not met them all individually, but we have had to deal with their leaders, and they are ignorant, stupid and corrupt. Surely these leaders must be the best among them, or they would not choose them."

Now, let me illustrate. I understand that two days ago, in this city, Mr. Gompers went off at a tangent and shot off his mouth about me. What he said was too ridiculous for me to answer. You will have noticed that he simply gave what he wishes you to consider as his opinion; he furnished you no facts from which he drew it, so that you could judge for yourselves. He expected you to take him on faith. I shall not insult you by treating you likewise. Here are the facts on which my conclusion is based:

In the State of New York we have a labor law forbidding the working of railroad men more than ten hours. The railroad companies disregarded the law; in Buffalo, the switchmen struck in 1892 to enforce the law; thereupon the Democratic Governor, Mr. Flower, who had himself signed the law, sent the whole militia of the State into Buffalo to help the railroad capitalists break the law, incidentally to commit assault and battery with intent to kill, as they actually did, upon the workingmen. Among our

State Senators is one Jacob Cantor. This gentleman hastened to applaud Gov. Flower's brutal violation of his oath of office to uphold the constitution and the laws; Cantor applauded the act as a patriotic one in the defense of "Law and Order." At a subsequent campaign, this Cantor being a candidate for re-election, the New York "Daily News," a capitalist paper of Cantor's political complexion, published an autograph letter addressed to him and intended to be an indorsement of him by Labor. This letter contained this passage among others: "If any one says you are not a friend of Labor, he says what is not true." By whom was this letter written and by whom signed?—by Mr. Samuel Gompers, "President of the American Federation of Labor." (Hisses.)

Whom are you hissing, Gompers or me? (Many voices: "Gompers!" followed by prolonged applause.)

Do you imagine that the consideration for that letter was merely the "love and affection" of Senator Cantor? (Laughter.)

Again: The Republican party, likewise the Democratic, is a party of the capitalist class; every man who is posted knows that; the conduct of its Presidents, Governors, Judges, Congresses and Legislatures can leave no doubt upon the subject. Likewise the free coinage of silver, or Populist party, was, while it lived, well known to be a party of capital; the conduct of its runners, the silver mine barons, who skin and then shoot down their miners, leaves no doubt upon that subject. But the two were deadly opposed: one wanted Gold, the other Silver. Notwithstanding these facts, a "labor leader" in New York city appeared at a recent campaign standing, not upon the Republican capitalist party platform only, not upon the Free-Silver capitalist party platform only, but—ON BOTH; he performed the acrobatic feat of being simultaneously for Gold and against Silver, for Silver against Gold. Who was that "labor leader"?—Mr. Samuel Gompers, "President of the American Federation of Labor."

Again: In Washington there is a son of a certain labor leader with a Government job. He is truly "non-partisan." Democrats may go and Republicans may come, Republicans may go and Democrats may come, but he goeth not; the Democratic and the Republican capitalists may fight

like cats and dogs, but on one thing they fraternize like cooing doves, to wit, to keep that son of a labor leader in office. Who is the father of that son?—Mr. Samuel Gompers, "President of the A. F. of L."

Again: You have here a "labor leader," named Ross (Applause in several parts of the hall)—Unhappy men! Unhappy men! As well might you applaud the name of your executioner. When I was here about three years ago I met him. He was all aglow with the project of a bill that he was going to see through your Legislature, of which he was and is now a member. It was the anti-fines bill; that, thought he, was going to put an end to an infamous practice of the mill owners. I argued with him that it does not matter what the law is; the all important thing was, which is the class charged with enforcing it. So long as the capitalist class held the Government, all such labor laws as he was straining for, were a snare and a delusion. What I said seemed to be Greek to him. He went ahead and the bill passed. And what happened? You continued to be fined after, as before; and when one of you sought to enforce the law, was he not arrested and imprisoned? (Voices: "That's so.") And when another brought the lawbreaking mill owner, who continued to fine him, into court, did not the capitalist court decide in favor of the capitalist (Voices: "That's so"), and thus virtually annulled the law? And where was Mr. Ross all this time? In the Massachusetts Legislature. Do you imagine that his ignorance of what a capitalist Government means, and of what its "labor laws" amount to, did not throw its shadow upon and color you in the capitalist's estimation? Do you, furthermore, imagine that his sitting there in that Legislature, a member of the majority party at that, and never once demanding the prompt impeachment of the Court that rendered null that very law that he had worked to pass,—do you imagine that while he plays such a complaisant role he is a credit to the working class?

No need of further illustrations. The ignorance, stupidity and corruption of the "pure and simple" labor leaders is such that the capitalist class despises you. The first prerequisite for success in a struggle is the respect of the enemy. (Applause.)

The other main cause of the present impotence of "pure and simple" unionism is that, through its ignoring the existing class distinctions, and its ignoring the close connection there is between wages and politics, it splits up at the ballot box among the parties of capital, and thus unites in upholding the system of capitalist exploitation. Look at the recent miners' strike; the men were shot down and the strike was lost; this happened in the very midst of a political campaign; and these miners, who could at any election capture the Government, or at least, by polling a big vote against capitalism announce their advance towards freedom, are seen to turn right around and vote back into power the very class that had just trampled upon them. What prospect is there in sight of such conduct, of the capitalists becoming gentler? or of the union gaining for the men anything NOW except more wage reductions, enforced by bullets? None! The prospect of the miners and other workers doing the same thing over again, a prospect that is made all the surer if they allow themselves to be further led by the labor fakirs whom the capitalists keep in pay, renders sure that capitalist outrages will be repeated and further capitalist encroachments will follow. Otherwise were it if the union, identifying politics and wages, voted against capitalism; if it struck at the ballot box against the wage system with the same solidarity that it demands for the strike in the shop. Protected once a year by the guns of an increasing class-conscious party of labor, the union could be a valuable fortification behind which to conduct the daily class struggle in the shops. The increasing Socialist Labor Party vote alone would not quite give that temporary protection in the shop that such an increasing vote would afford if in the shop also the workers were intelligently organized, and honestly, because intelligently, led. Without organization in the shop, the capitalist could outrage at least individuals. Shop organization alone, unbacked by that political force that threatens the capitalist class with extinction, the working class being the overwhelming majority, leaves the workers wholly unprotected. But the shop organization that combines in its warfare the annually recurring class-conscious ballot, can stem capitalist encroachment from day to day. The trade organization IS impotent if built and conducted upon the impotent lines of ignorance and corruption. The trade

organization IS NOT impotent if built and conducted upon the lines of knowledge and honesty; if it understands the issue and steps into the arena fully equipped, not with the shield of the trade union only, but also with the sword of the Socialist ballot.

The essential principles of sound organization are, accordingly, these:

1st—A trade organization must be clear upon the fact that, not until it has overthrown the capitalist system of private ownership in the machinery of production, and made this the joint property of the people, thereby compelling every one to work if he wants to live, is it at all possible for the workers to be safe. (Applause.)

2nd—A labor organization must be perfectly clear upon the fact that it cannot reach safety until it has wrenched the Government from the clutches of the capitalist class; and that it cannot do that unless it votes, not for MEN but for PRINCIPLES, unless it votes into power its own class platform and programme: THE ABOLITION OF THE WAGES SYSTEM OF SLAVERY.

3rd—A labor organization must be perfectly clear upon the fact that politics are not, like religion, a private concern, any more than the wages and the hours of a workingman are his private concern. For the same reason that his wages and hours are the concern of his class, so is his politics. (Applause.) Politics is not separable from wages. For the same reason that the organization of labor dictates wages, hours, etc., in the interest of the working class, for that same reason must it dictate politics also; and for the same reason that it execrates the scab in the shop, it must execrate the scab at the hustings. (Applause.)

THE WORK OF THE SOCIALIST TRADE & LABOR ALLIANCE.

Long did the Socialist Labor Party and New Trade Unionists seek to deliver this important message to the broad masses of the American proletariat, the rank and file of our working class. But we could not reach, we could not get at them. Between us and them there stood a solid

wall of ignorant, stupid and corrupt labor fakirs. Like men groping in a dark room for an exit, we moved along the wall, bumping our heads, feeling ever onwards for a door; we made the circuit and no passage was found. The wall was solid. This discovery once made, there was no way other than to batter a breach through that wall. With the battering ram of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance we effected a passage; the wall now crumbles; at last we stand face to face with the rank and file of the American proletariat (Long and continued applause); and we ARE DELIVERING OUR MESSAGE (Renewed applause)—as you may judge from the howl that goes up from that fakirs' wall that we have broken through.

I shall not consider my time well spent with you if I see no fruit of my labors; if I leave not behind me in New Bedford Local Alliances of your trades organized in the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance. That will be my best contribution toward your strike, as they will serve as centers of enlightenment to strengthen you in your conflict, to the extent that it may now be possible.

In conclusion, my best advice to you for immediate action, is to step out boldly upon the streets, as soon as you can; organize a monster parade of the strikers and of all the other working people in the town; and let the parade be headed by a banner bearing the announcement to your employers:

"We will fight you in this strike to the bitter end; your money bag may beat us now; but whether it does or not, that is not the end, it is only the beginning of the song; in November we will meet again at Philippi, and the strike shall not end until, with the falchion of the Socialist Labor Party ballot, we shall have laid you low for all time!" (Loud applause.)

This is the message that it has been my agreeable privilege to deliver to you in the name of the Socialist Labor Party and of the New Trade Unionists or Alliance men of the land. (Prolonged applause.)

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